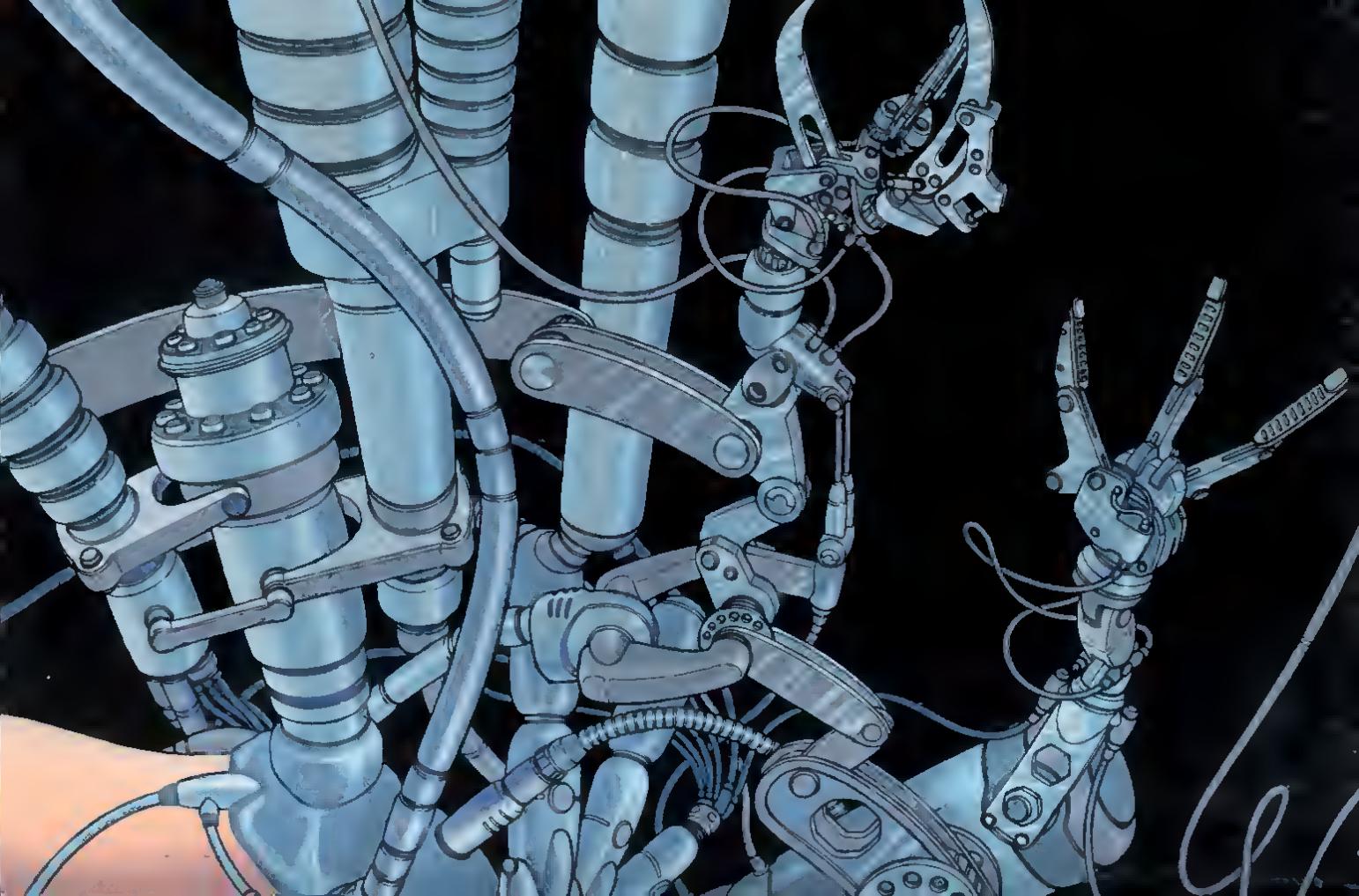

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CHRONOWAR

KAZUHASA TAKAYAMA

CHRONOWAR

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translated by DANA LEWIS
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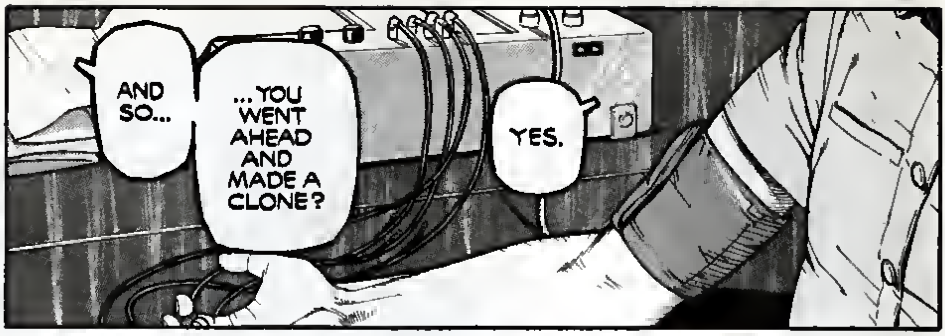
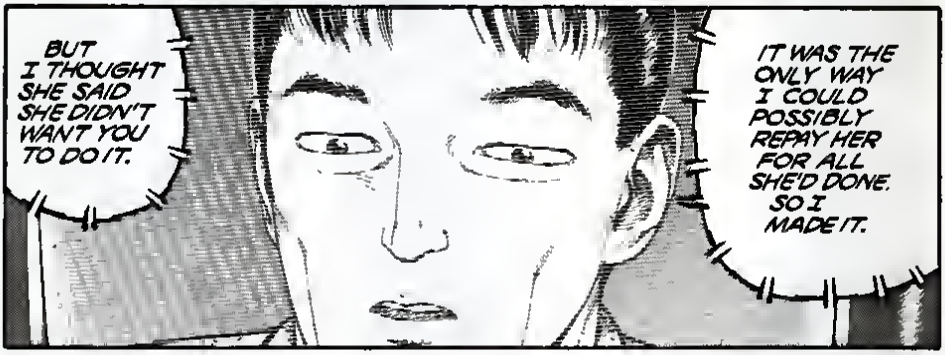
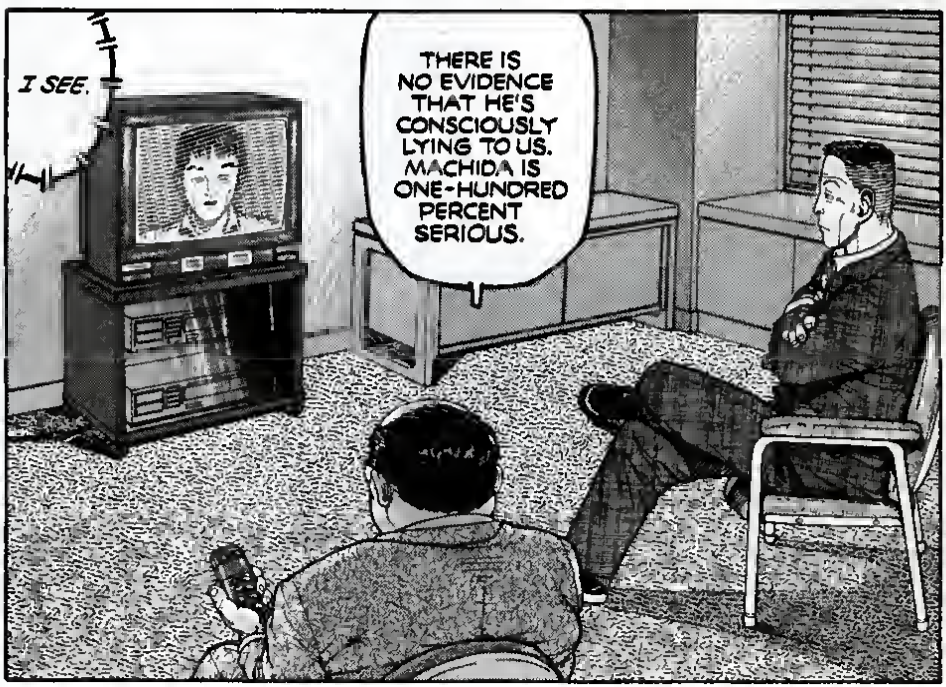
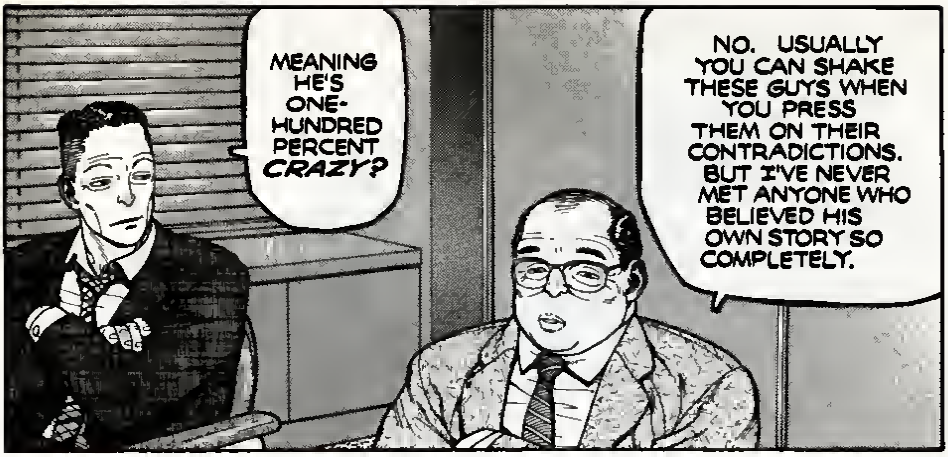
CROSSGEAR

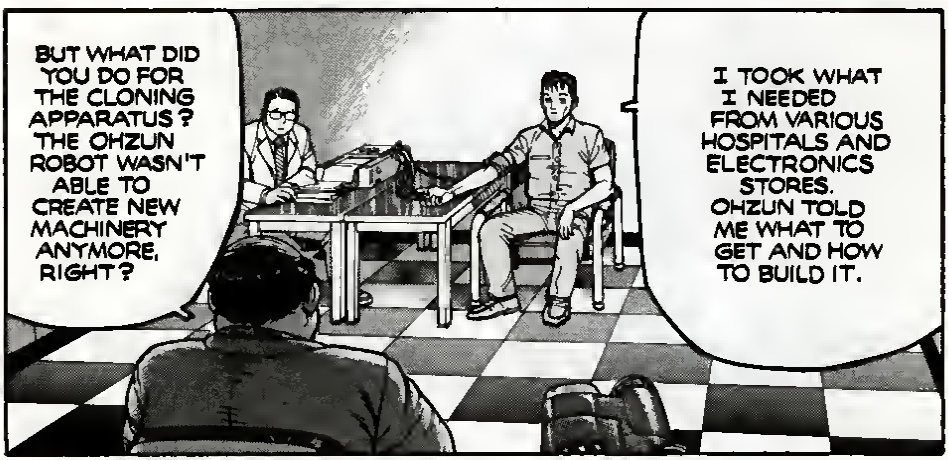
KAZUMASA TAKAYAMA

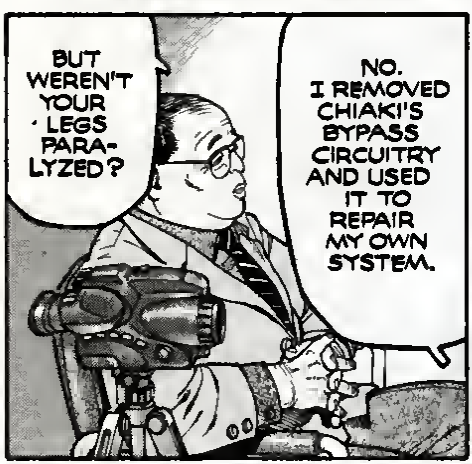

AND SO...
...YOU WENT AHEAD AND MADE A CLONE?
YES.


BUT I THOUGHT SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T WANT YOU TO DO IT.
IT WAS THE ONLY WAY I COULD POSSIBLY REPAY HER FOR ALL SHE'D DONE. SO I MADE IT.


I SEE.
THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT HE'S CONSCIOUSLY LYING TO US. MACHIDA IS ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT SERIOUS.


MEANING HE'S ONE-HUNDRED PERCENT CRAZY?
NO. USUALLY YOU CAN SHAKE THESE GUYS WHEN YOU PRESS THEM ON THEIR CONTRADICTIONS. BUT I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE WHO BELIEVED HIS OWN STORY SO COMPLETELY.

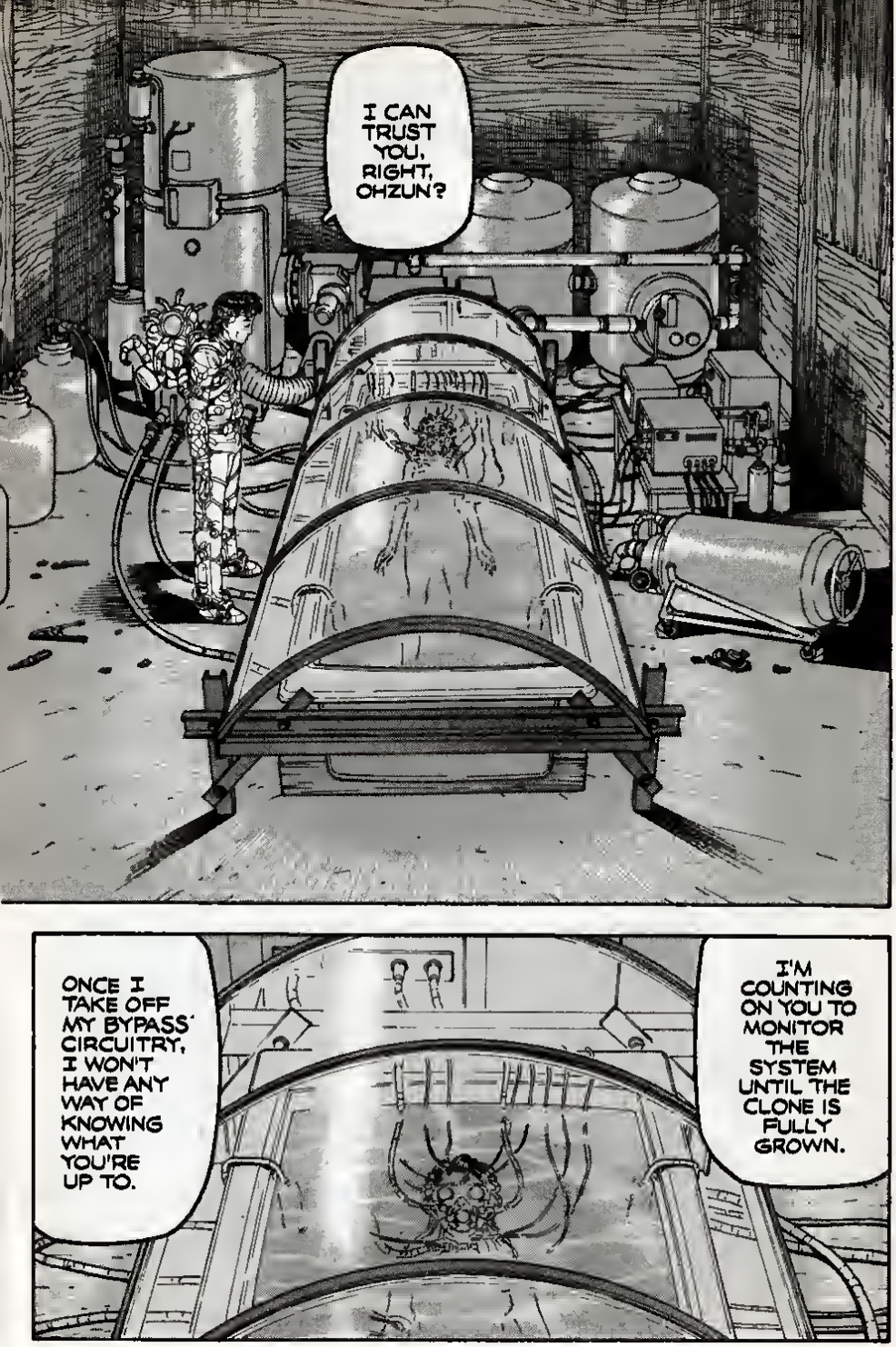

BUT WHAT DID YOU DO FOR THE CLONING APPARATUS? THE OHZUN ROBOT WASN'T ABLE TO CREATE NEW MACHINERY ANYMORE, RIGHT?
I TOOK WHAT I NEEDED FROM VARIOUS HOSPITALS AND ELECTRONICS STORES. OHZUN TOLD ME WHAT TO GET AND HOW TO BUILD IT.

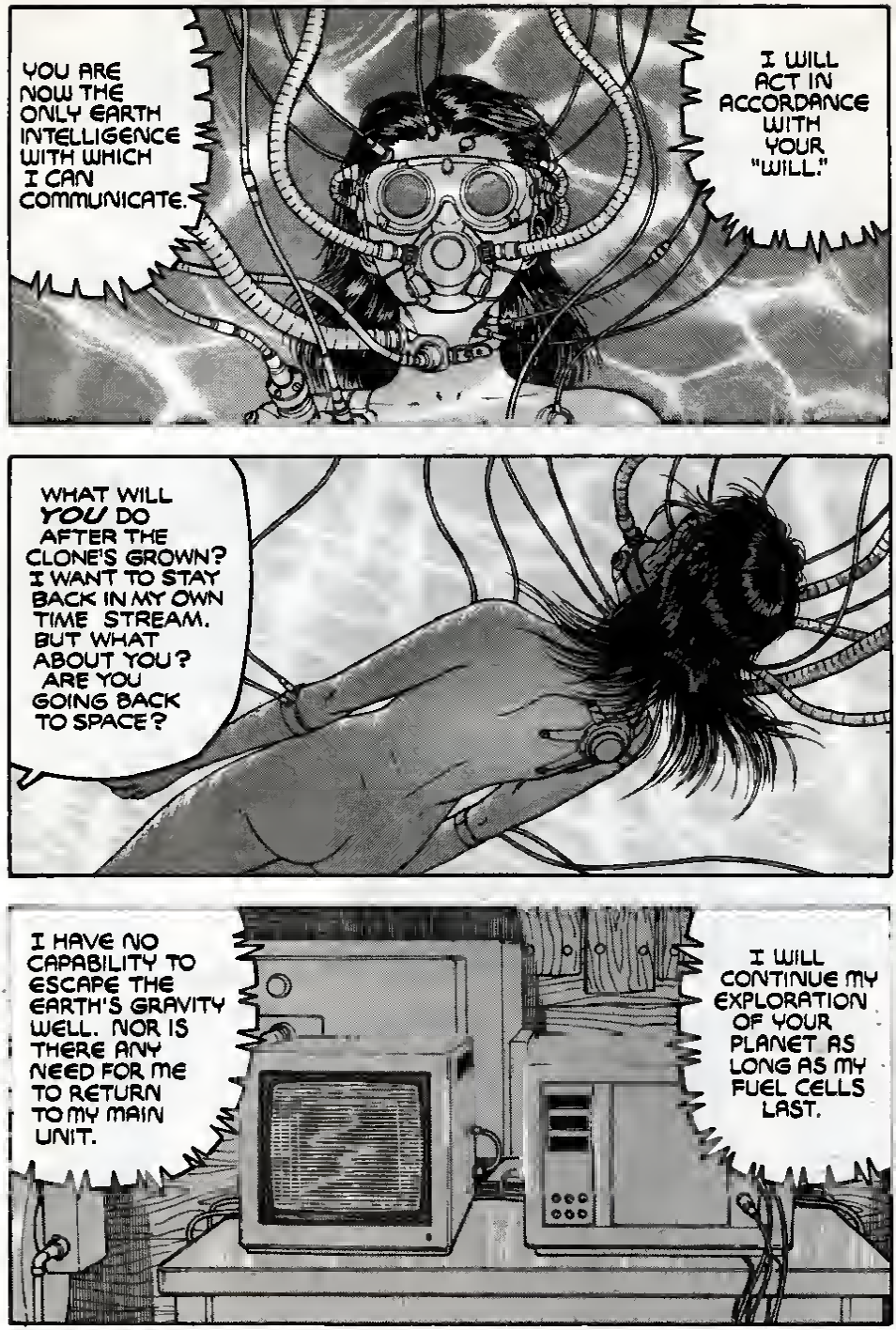

BUT WEREN'T YOUR LEGS PARA-LYZED?
NO. I REMOVED CHIAKI'S BYPASS CIRCUITRY AND USED IT TO REPAIR MY OWN SYSTEM.

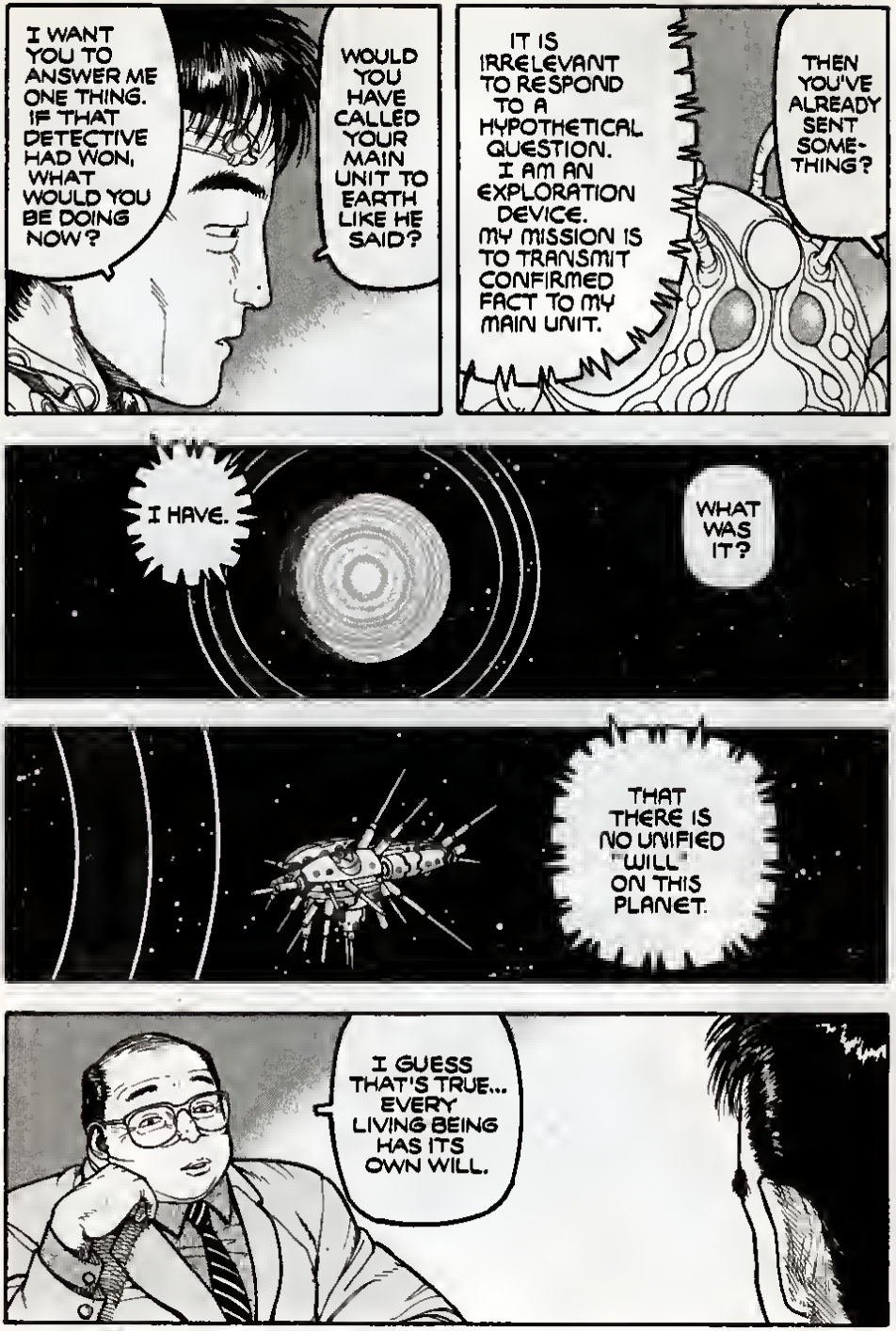
THAT ALSO LET ME GO AHEAD WITH MY WORK WHILE SHE STAYED FROZEN IN TIME.

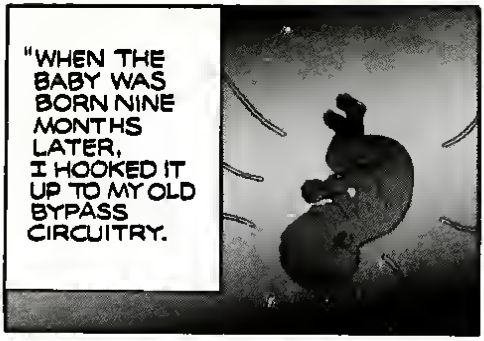
"BY MY TIME SENSE, IT TOOK ME A FEW WEEKS... MAYBE TWENTY DAYS OR SO... TO FINISH THE EQUIP-MENT."

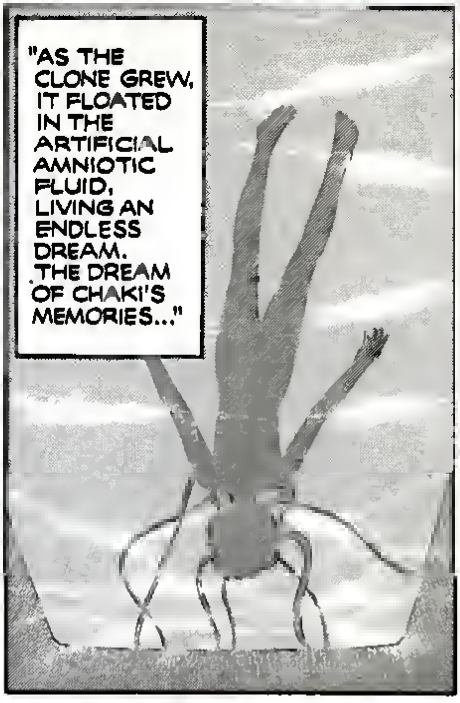
"I INSTALLED IT DEEP IN THE TANZAWA MOUNTAINS SO NO ONE WOULD STUMBLE ACROSS IT."
IT WAS GOING TO TAKE NINE MONTHS FOR THE FETUS TO COME TO TERM. I COULDN'T LET ANYONE FIND US BEFORE THEN.
COULDN'T YOU HAVE MADE IT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT? JUST HOOK HER UP TO THAT BYPASS CIRCUITRY?
"NO. CHIAKI HAS THE BYPASS CIRCUITRY ATTACHED, BUT THE FETUS WOULD NOT, AND WOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AT A REAL-TIME RATE.
"SO WHEN I FINISHED SETTING UP THE EQUIPMENT, I REMOVED MY OWN BYPASS CIRCUITRY SO I COULD MONITOR THE PROCESS IN REAL TIME...."

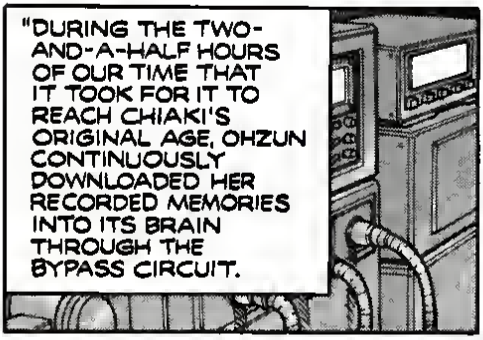

I CAN TRUST YOU, RIGHT, OHZUN?
ONCE I TAKE OFF MY BYPASS CIRCUITRY, I WON'T HAVE ANY WAY OF KNOWING WHAT YOU'RE UP TO.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU TO MONITOR THE SYSTEM UNTIL THE CLONE IS FULLY GROWN.

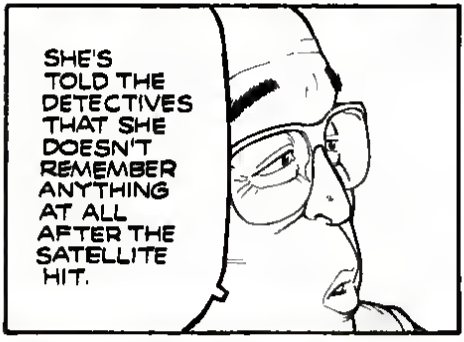

YOU ARE NOW THE ONLY EARTH INTELLIGENCE WITH WHICH I CAN COMMUNICATE.
I WILL ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR "WILL."
WHAT WILL YOU DO AFTER THE CLONE'S GROWN? I WANT TO STAY BACK IN MY OWN TIME STREAM. BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU GOING BACK TO SPACE?
I HAVE NO CAPABILITY TO ESCAPE THE EARTH'S GRAVITY WELL. NOR IS THERE ANY NEED FOR ME TO RETURN TO MY MAIN UNIT.
I WILL CONTINUE MY EXPLORATION OF YOUR PLANET AS LONG AS MY FUEL CELLS LAST.

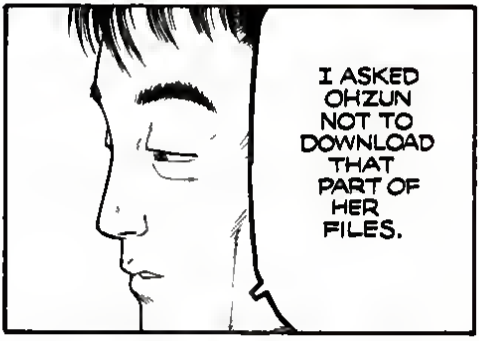

I WANT YOU TO ANSWER ME ONE THING. IF THAT DETECTIVE HAD WON, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING NOW?
WOULD YOU HAVE CALLED YOUR MAIN UNIT TO EARTH LIKE HE SAID?
IT IS IRRELEVANT TO RESPOND TO A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION. I AM AN EXPLORATION DEVICE. MY MISSION IS TO TRANSMIT CONFIRMED FACT TO MY MAIN UNIT.
THEN YOU'VE ALREADY SENT SOME-THING?
I HAVE.
WHAT WAS IT?
THAT THERE IS NO UNIFIED "WILL" ON THIS PLANET.
I GUESS THAT'S TRUE... EVERY LIVING BEING HAS ITS OWN WILL.

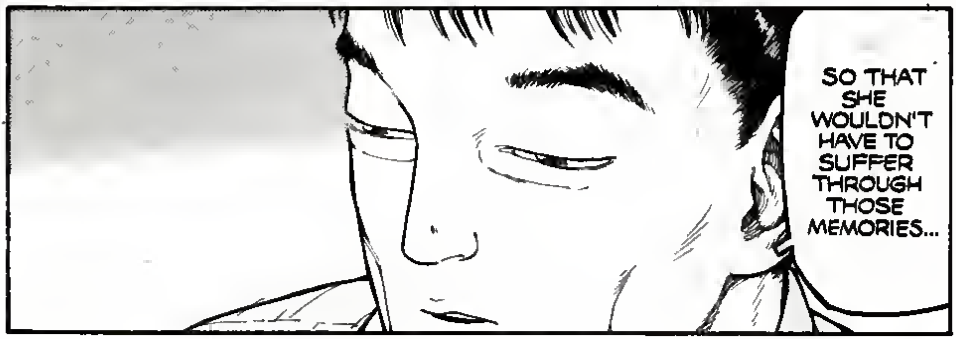

"WHEN THE BABY WAS BORN NINE MONTHS LATER, I HOOKED IT UP TO MY OLD BYPASS CIRCUITRY.

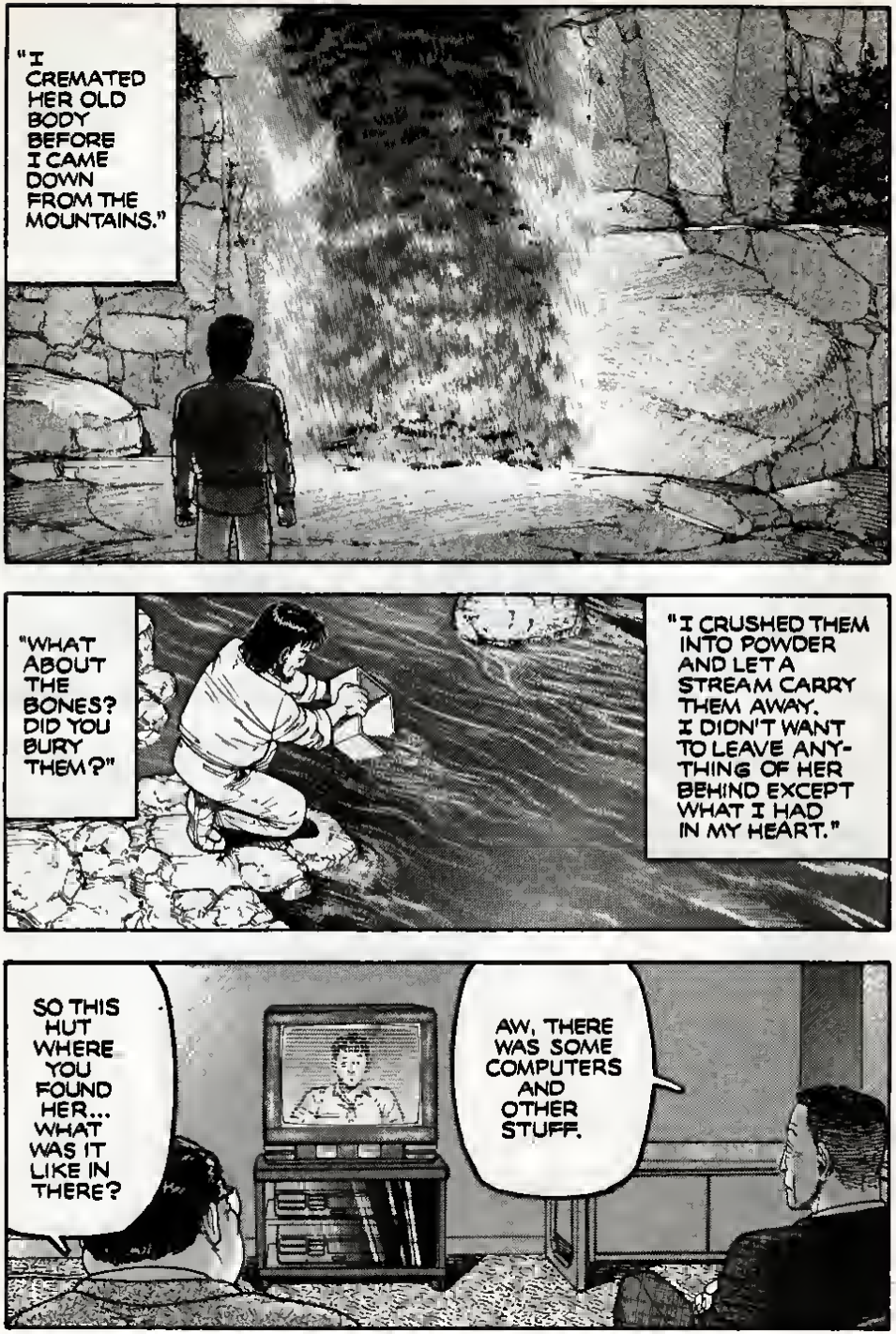

"AS THE CLONE GREW, IT FLOATED IN THE ARTIFICIAL AMNIOTIC FLUID, LIVING AN ENDLESS DREAM. THE DREAM OF CHAKI'S MEMORIES..."

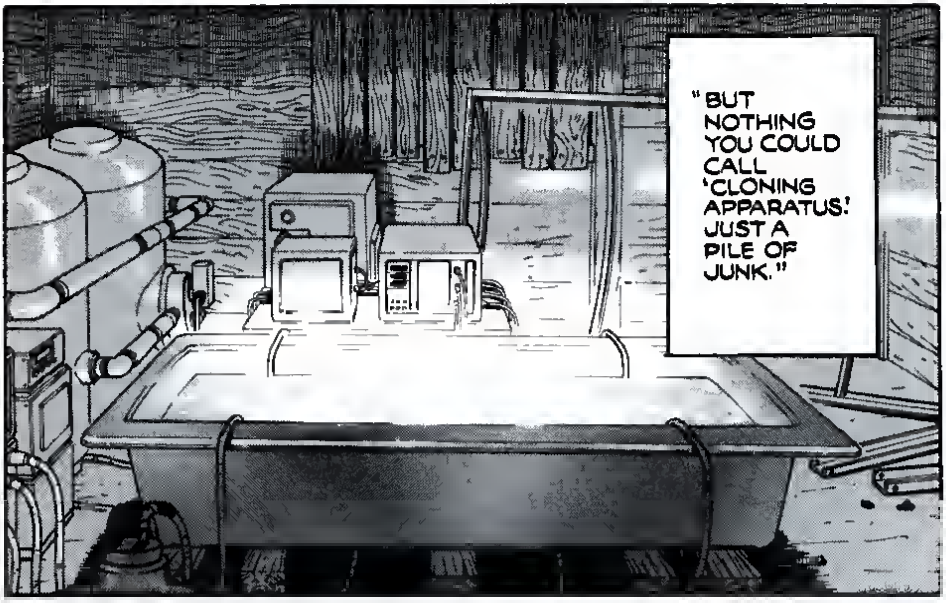

"DURING THE TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS OF OUR TIME THAT IT TOOK FOR IT TO REACH CHIAKI'S ORIGINAL AGE, OHZUN CONTINUOUSLY DOWNLOADED HER RECORDED MEMORIES INTO ITS BRAIN THROUGH THE BYPASS CIRCUIT.

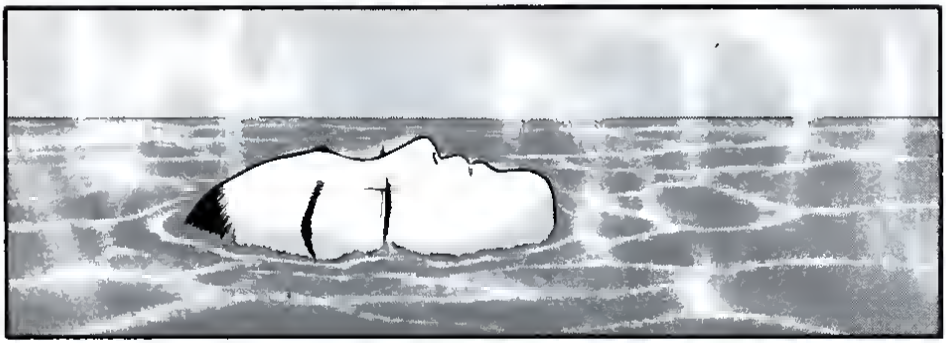

SHE'S TOLD THE DETECTIVES THAT SHE DOESN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING AT ALL AFTER THE SATELLITE HIT.

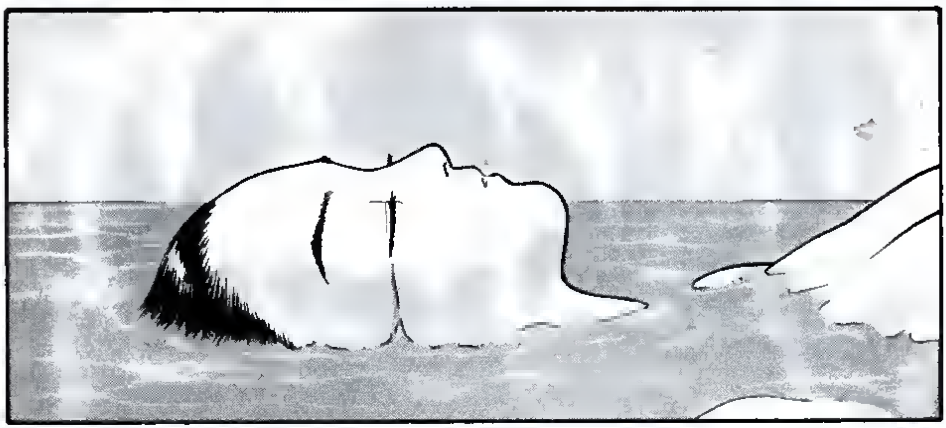

I ASKED OHZUN NOT TO DOWNLOAD THAT PART OF HER FILES.

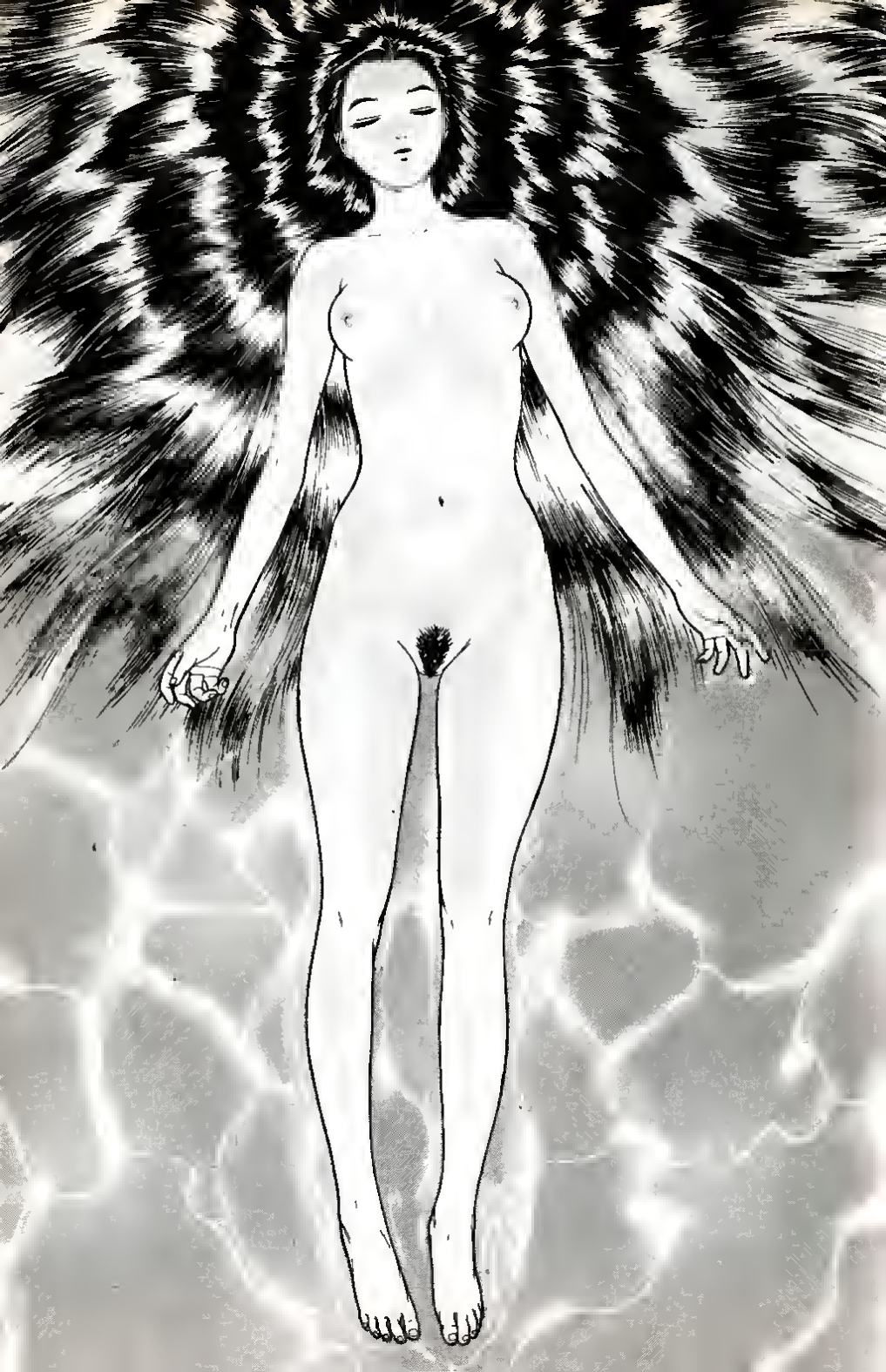

SO THAT SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO SUFFER THROUGH THOSE MEMORIES...

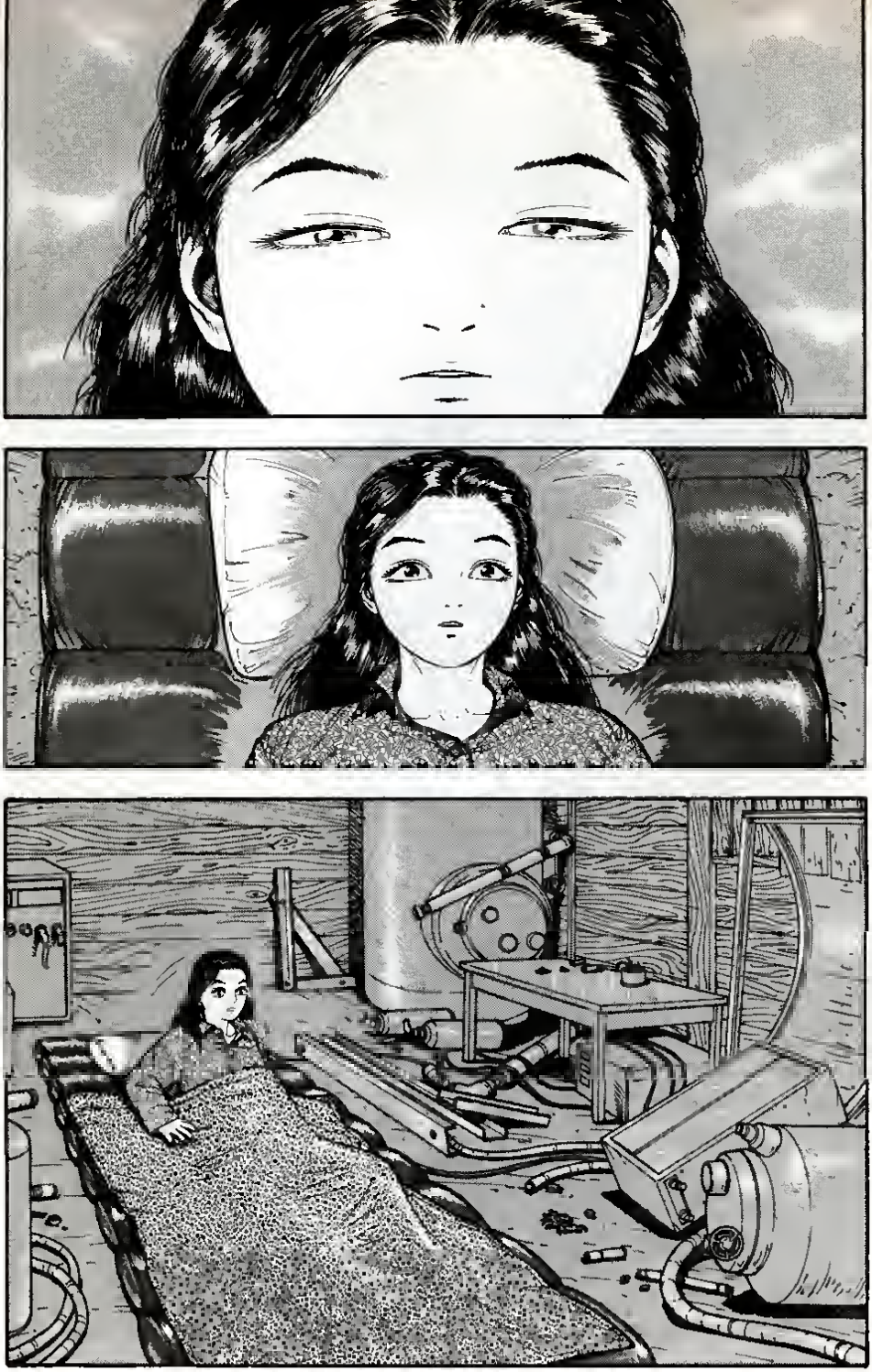

"I CREMATED HER OLD BODY BEFORE I CAME DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS."
"WHAT ABOUT THE BONES? DID YOU BURY THEM?"
"I CRUSHED THEM INTO POWDER AND LET A STREAM CARRY THEM AWAY. I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE ANY-THING OF HER BEHIND EXCEPT WHAT I HAD IN MY HEART."
SO THIS HUT WHERE YOU FOUND HER... WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THERE?
AW, THERE WAS SOME COMPUTERS AND OTHER STUFF.


"BUT NOTHING YOU COULD CALL 'CLONING APPARATUS.' JUST A PILE OF JUNK."



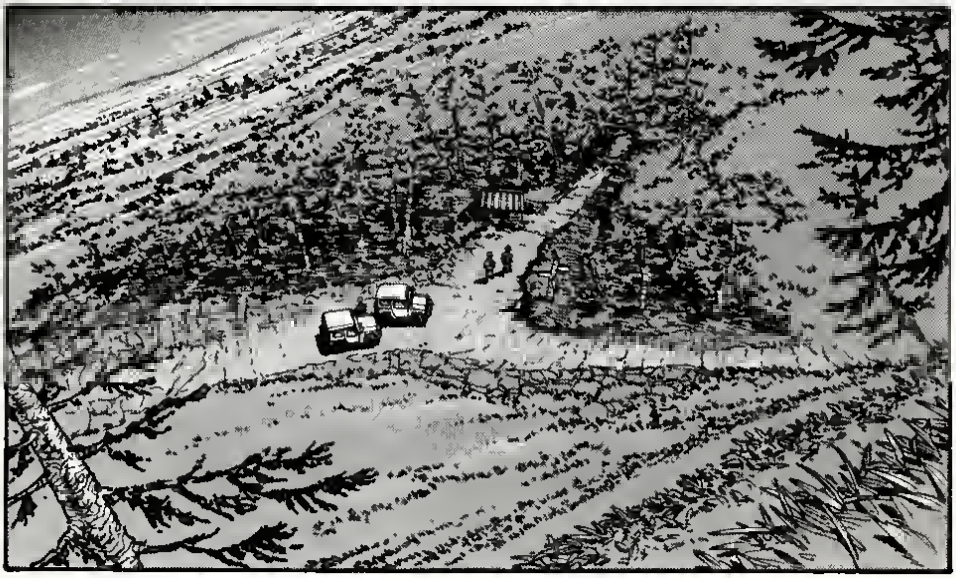


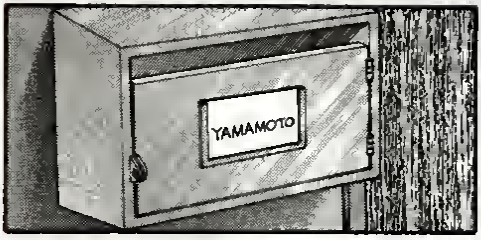


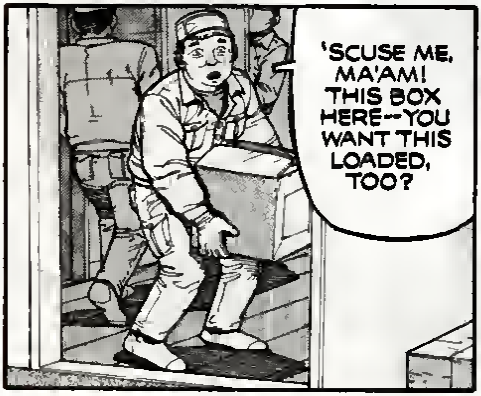


BRMBB

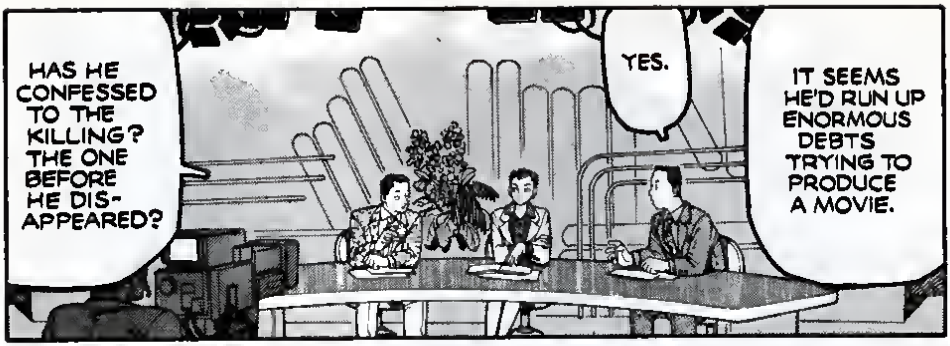
POLICE

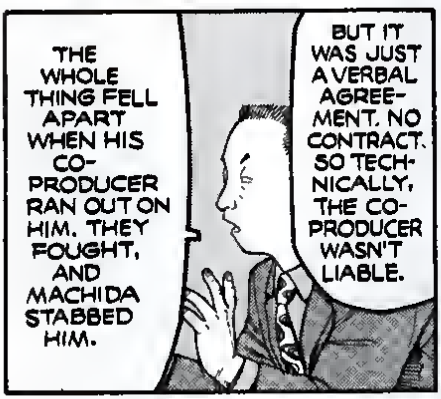


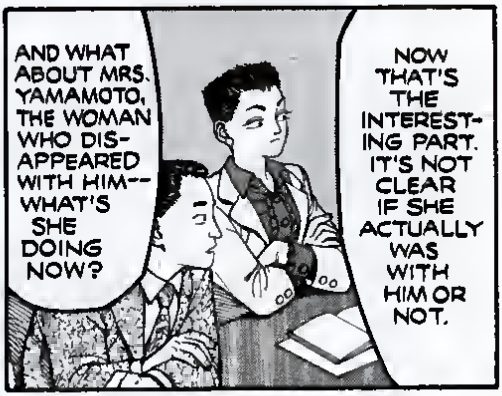

YAMAMOTO

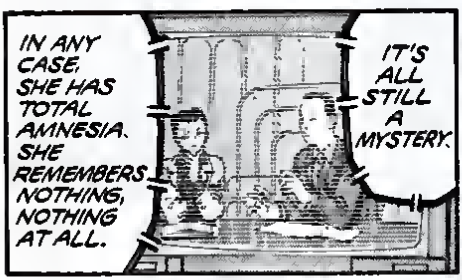

'SCUSE ME, MA'AM! THIS BOX HERE--YOU WANT THIS LOADED, TOO?

OH, THAT? NO, NO... THAT'S JUST GARBAGE.
I'LL LEAVE IT OVER HERE, THEN, OKAY?
THAT'S FINE. THANK YOU.
WHUD
SO MACHIDA HASN'T TOLD THE POLICE ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT HE WAS UP TO FOR THE MONTHS HE'S BEEN MISSING?
APPARENTLY NOT. OF COURSE, THE POLICE STILL HAVEN'T ISSUED A FORMAL STATE-MENT.

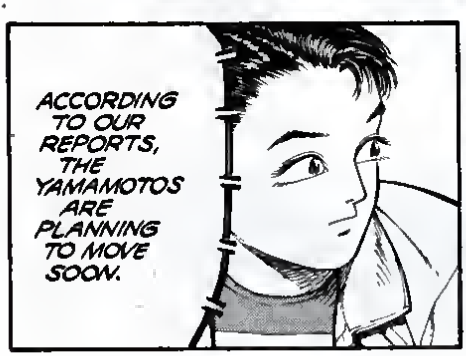

HAS HE CONFESSED TO THE KILLING? THE ONE BEFORE HE DIS-APPEARED?
YES.
IT SEEMS HE'D RUN UP ENORMOUS DEBTS TRYING TO PRODUCE A MOVIE.

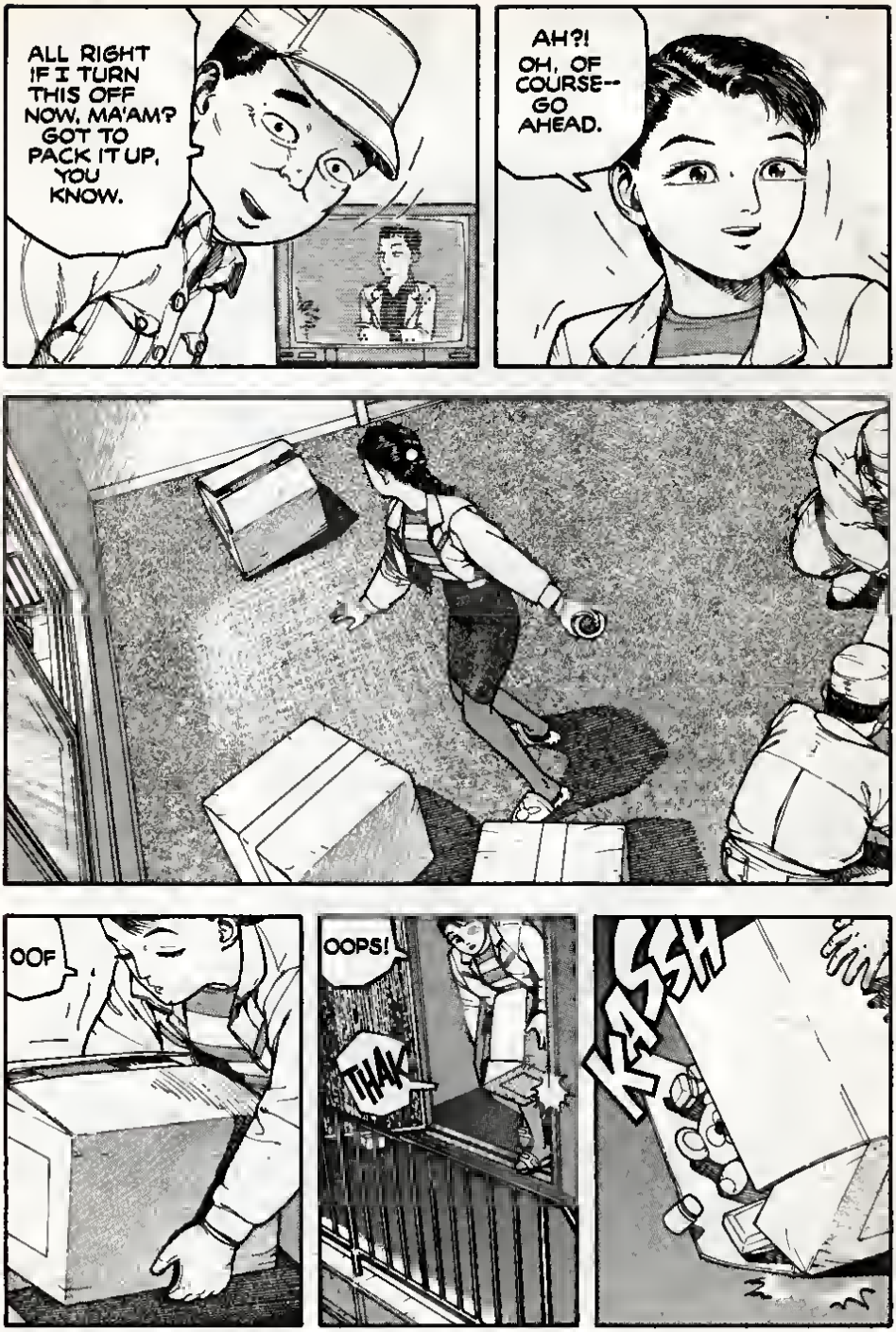

THE WHOLE THING FELL APART WHEN HIS CO-PRODUCER RAN OUT ON HIM. THEY FOUGHT, AND MACHIDA STABBED HIM.
BUT IT WAS JUST A VERBAL AGREE-MENT. NO CONTRACT. SO TECH-NICALLY, THE CO-PRODUCER WASN'T LIABLE.

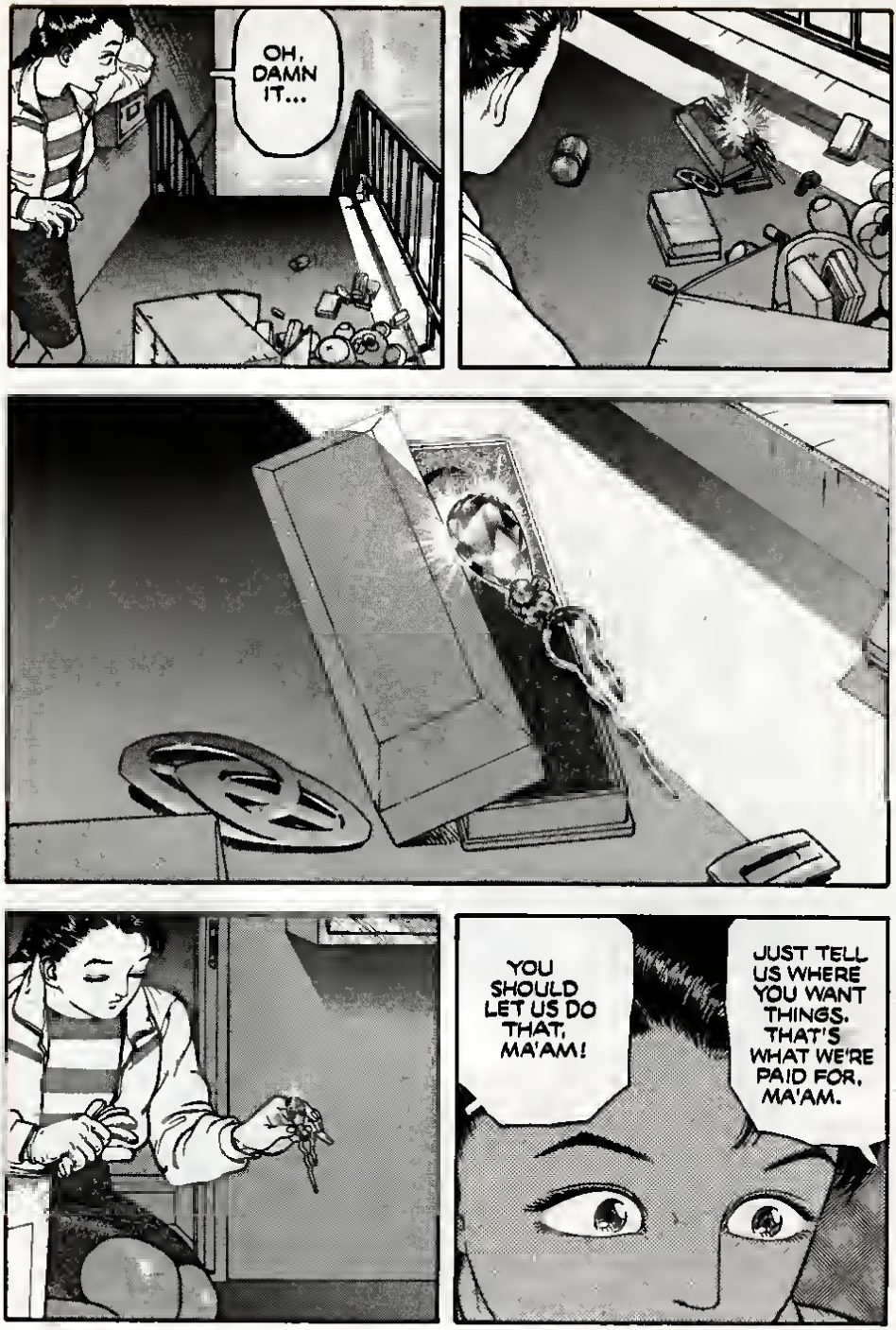

AND WHAT ABOUT MRS. YAMAMOTO, THE WOMAN WHO DIS-APPEARED WITH HIM-- WHAT'S SHE DOING NOW?
NOW THAT'S THE INTEREST-ING PART. IT'S NOT CLEAR IF SHE ACTUALLY WAS WITH HIM OR NOT.

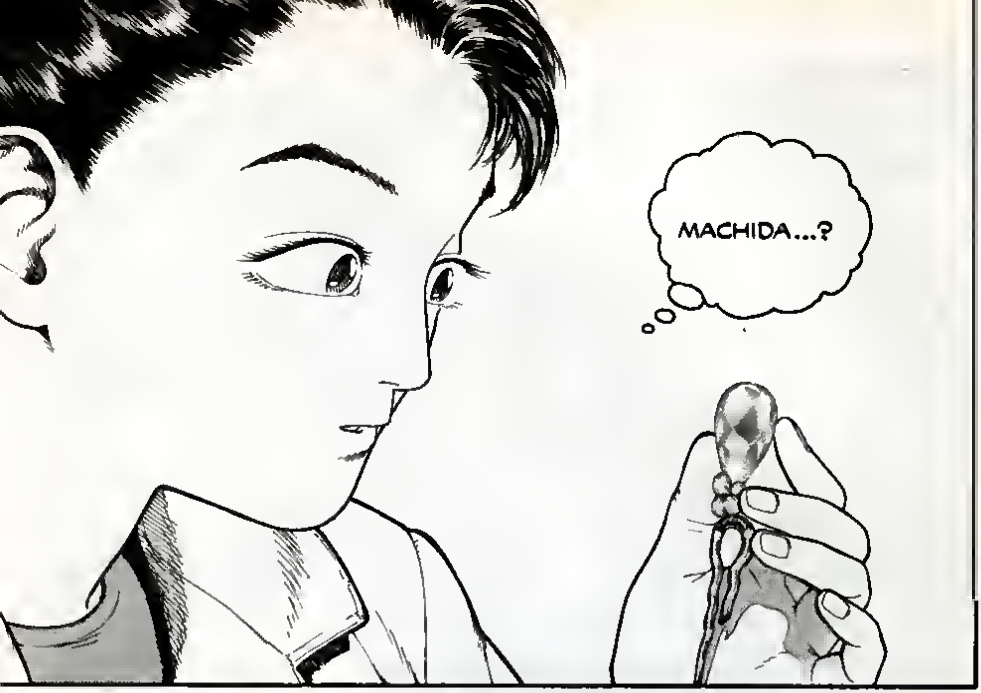

IN ANY CASE, SHE HAS TOTAL AMNESIA. SHE REMEMBERS NOTHING, NOTHING AT ALL.
IT'S ALL STILL A MYSTERY.

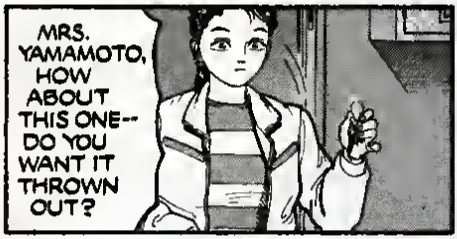
IT SEEMS THEY WERE BEING BOTHERED BY REPORTERS AND PHOTO-GRAPHERS DAY AND NIGHT, SO...
IT'S A SHAME THAT OUR COLLEAGUES IN THE PRESS DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO RESPECT HER PRIVACY. WELL, I HOPE SHE FINDS SOME PEACE, WHER-EVER THEY'RE GOING.

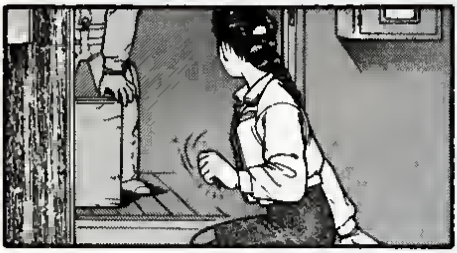

ACCORDING TO OUR REPORTS, THE YAMAMOTOS ARE PLANNING TO MOVE SOON.

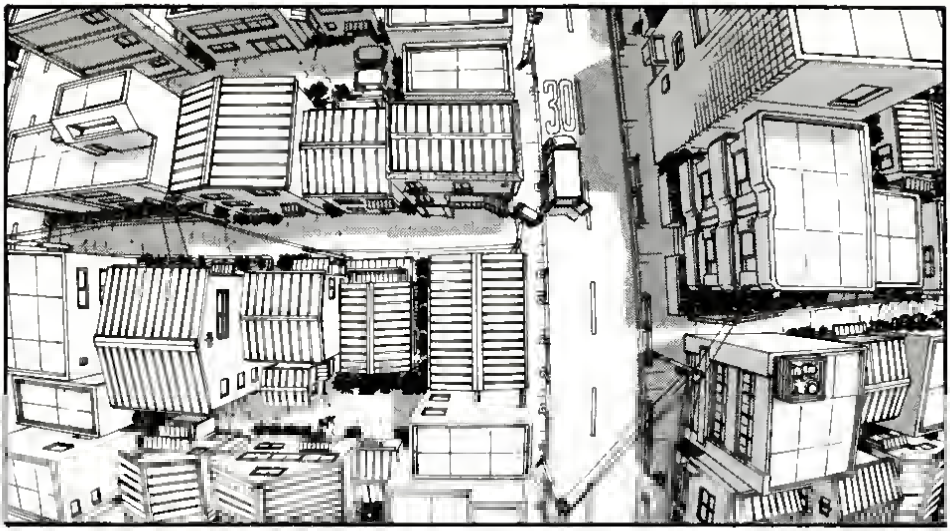

ALL RIGHT IF I TURN THIS OFF NOW, MA'AM? GOT TO PACK IT UP, YOU KNOW.
AH?! OH, OF COURSE-- GO AHEAD.
OOF
OOPS!
THAK
KASH


OH, DAMN IT...
YOU SHOULD LET US DO THAT, MA'AM!
JUST TELL US WHERE YOU WANT THINGS. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE PAID FOR, MA'AM.


MACHIDA...?


MRS. YAMAMOTO, HOW ABOUT THIS ONE-- DO YOU WANT IT THROWN OUT?

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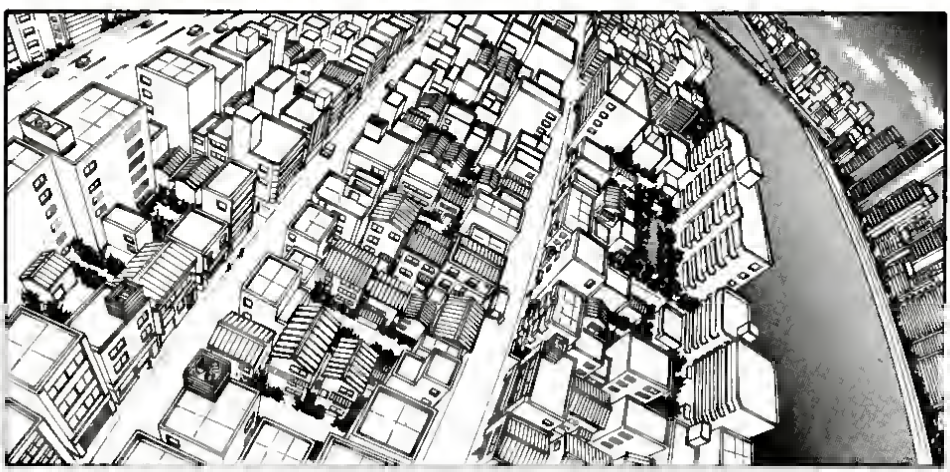
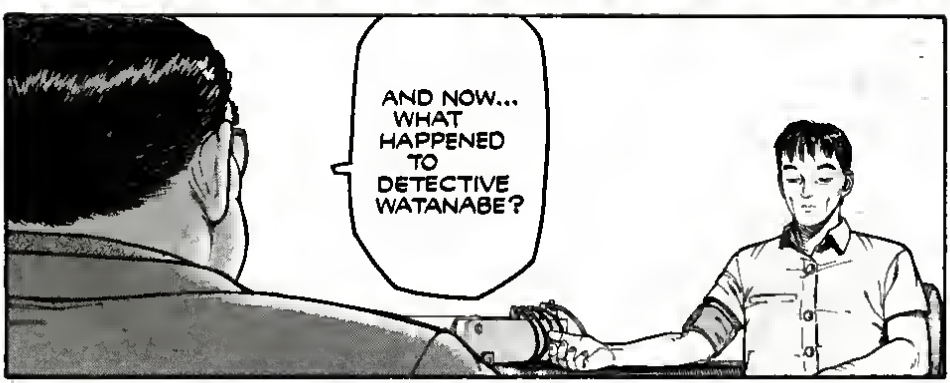
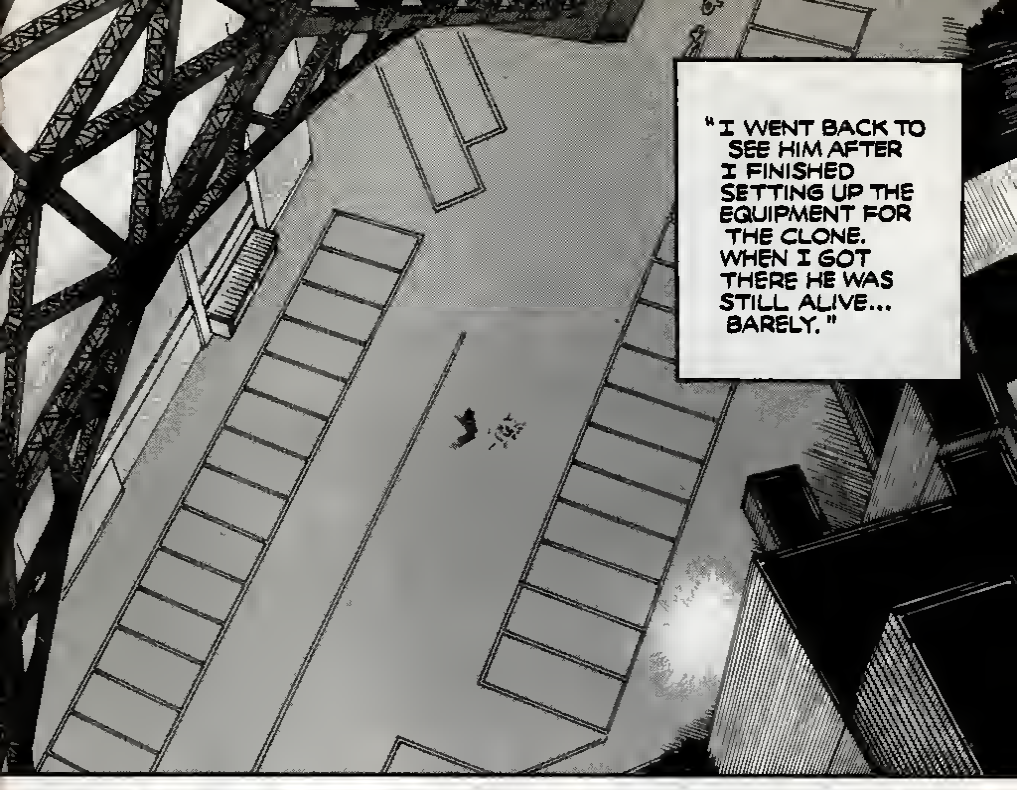
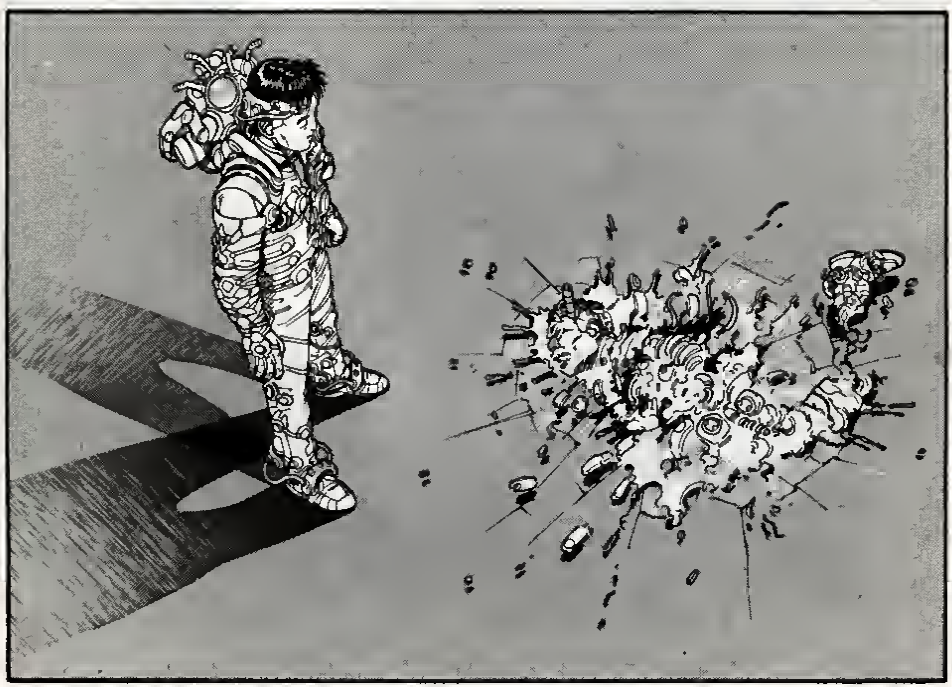
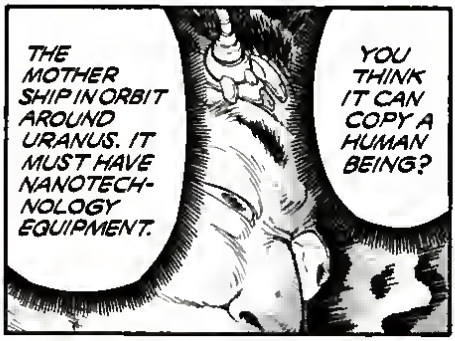
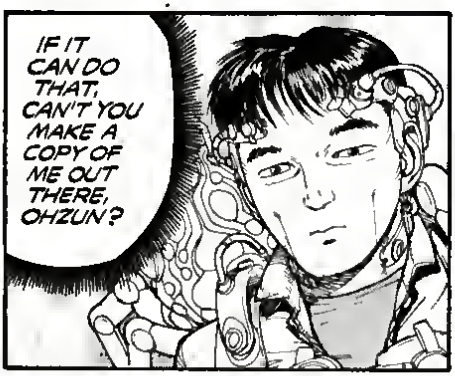


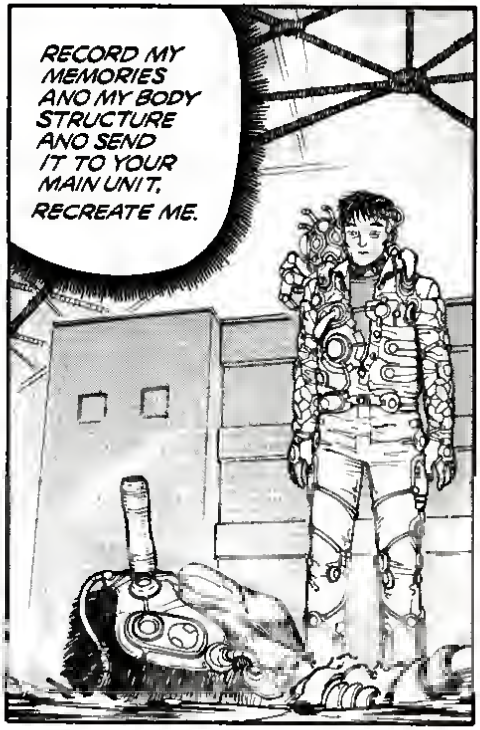

AND NOW... WHAT HAPPENED TO DETECTIVE WATANABE?

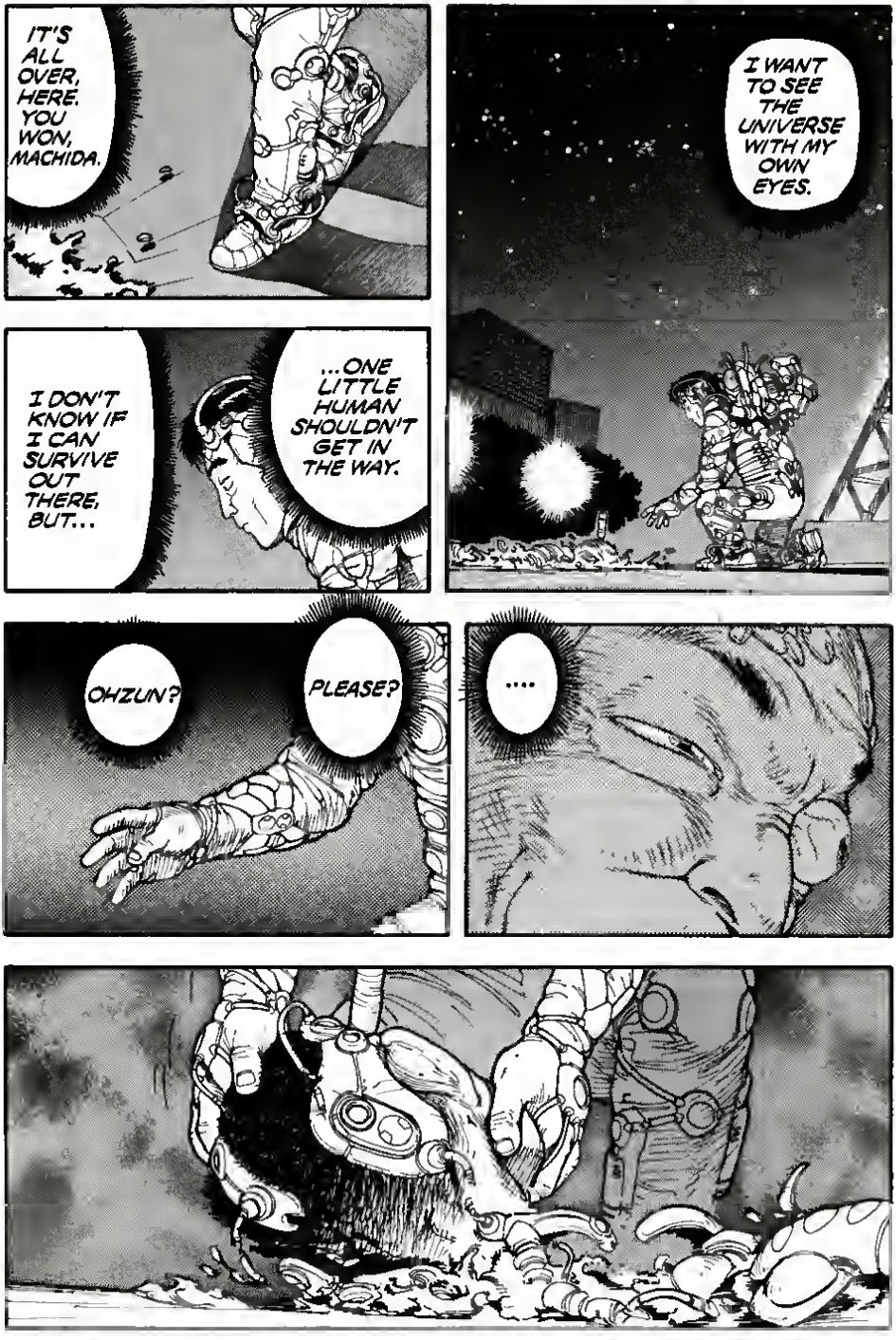

"I WENT BACK TO SEE HIM AFTER I FINISHED SETTING UP THE EQUIPMENT FOR THE CLONE. WHEN I GOT THERE HE WAS STILL ALIVE... BARELY."

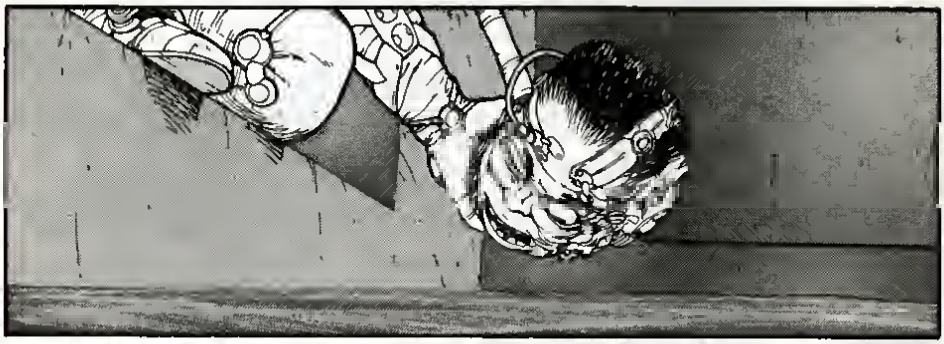


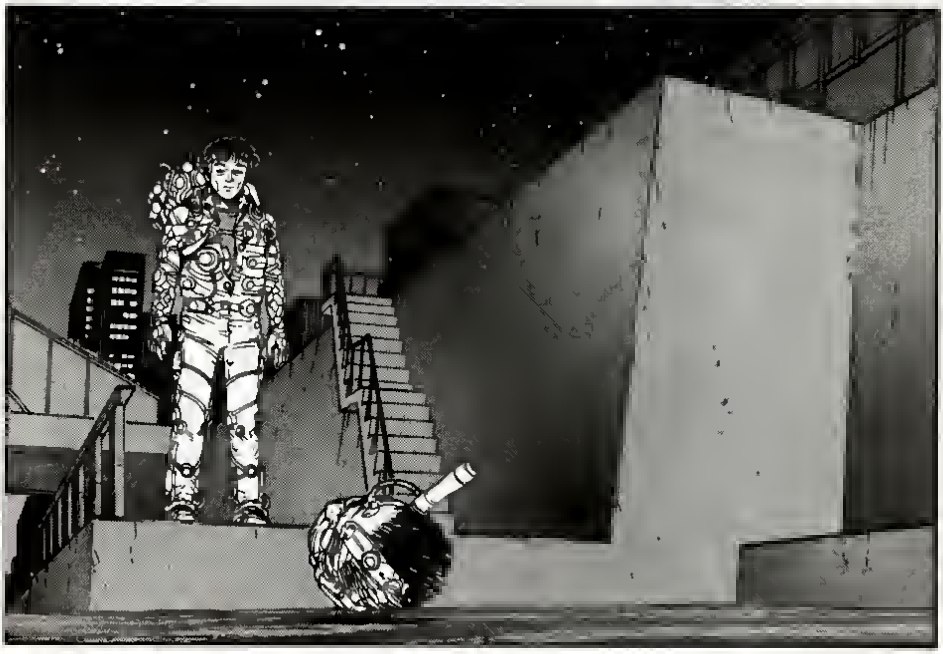

THE MOTHER SHIP IN ORBIT AROUND URANUS. IT MUST HAVE NANOTECH-NOLOGY EQUIPMENT.
YOU THINK IT CAN COPY A HUMAN BEING?


IF IT CAN DO THAT, CAN'T YOU MAKE A COPY OF ME OUT THERE, OHZUN?

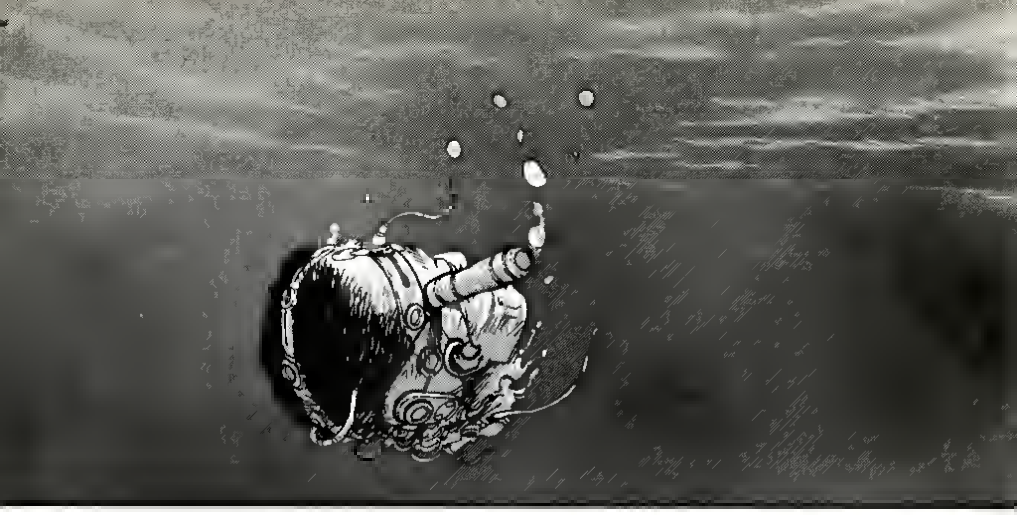

RECORD MY MEMORIES AND MY BODY STRUCTURE AND SEND IT TO YOUR MAIN UNIT.
RECREATE ME.

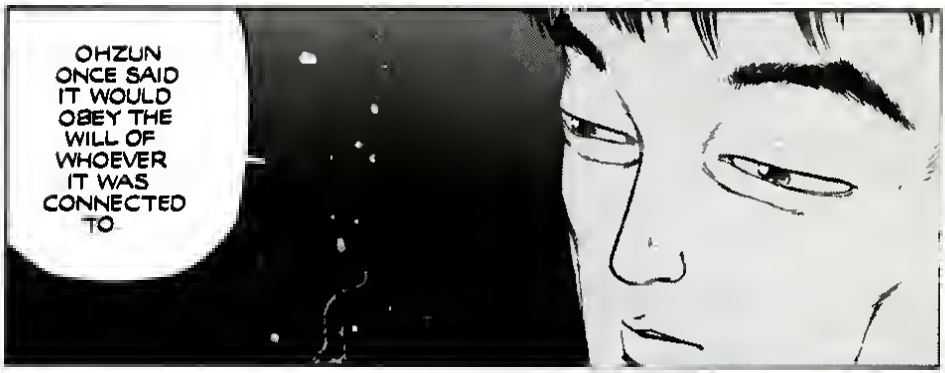

IT'S ALL OVER, HERE. YOU WON, MACHIDA.
I WANT TO SEE THE UNIVERSE WITH MY OWN EYES.
I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN SURVIVE OUT THERE, BUT...
...ONE LITTLE HUMAN SHOULDN'T GET IN THE WAY.
OHZUN?
PLEASE?
....

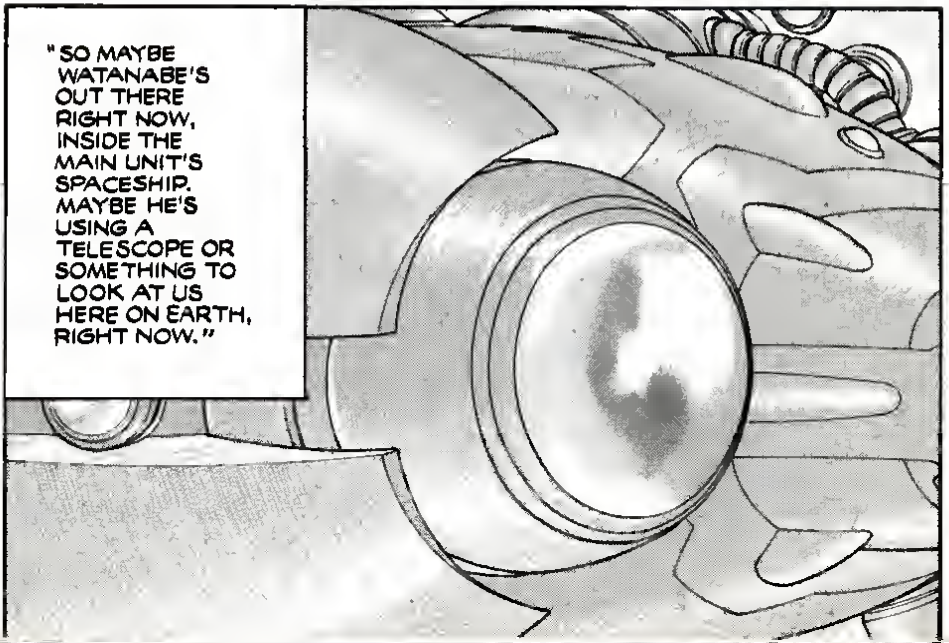


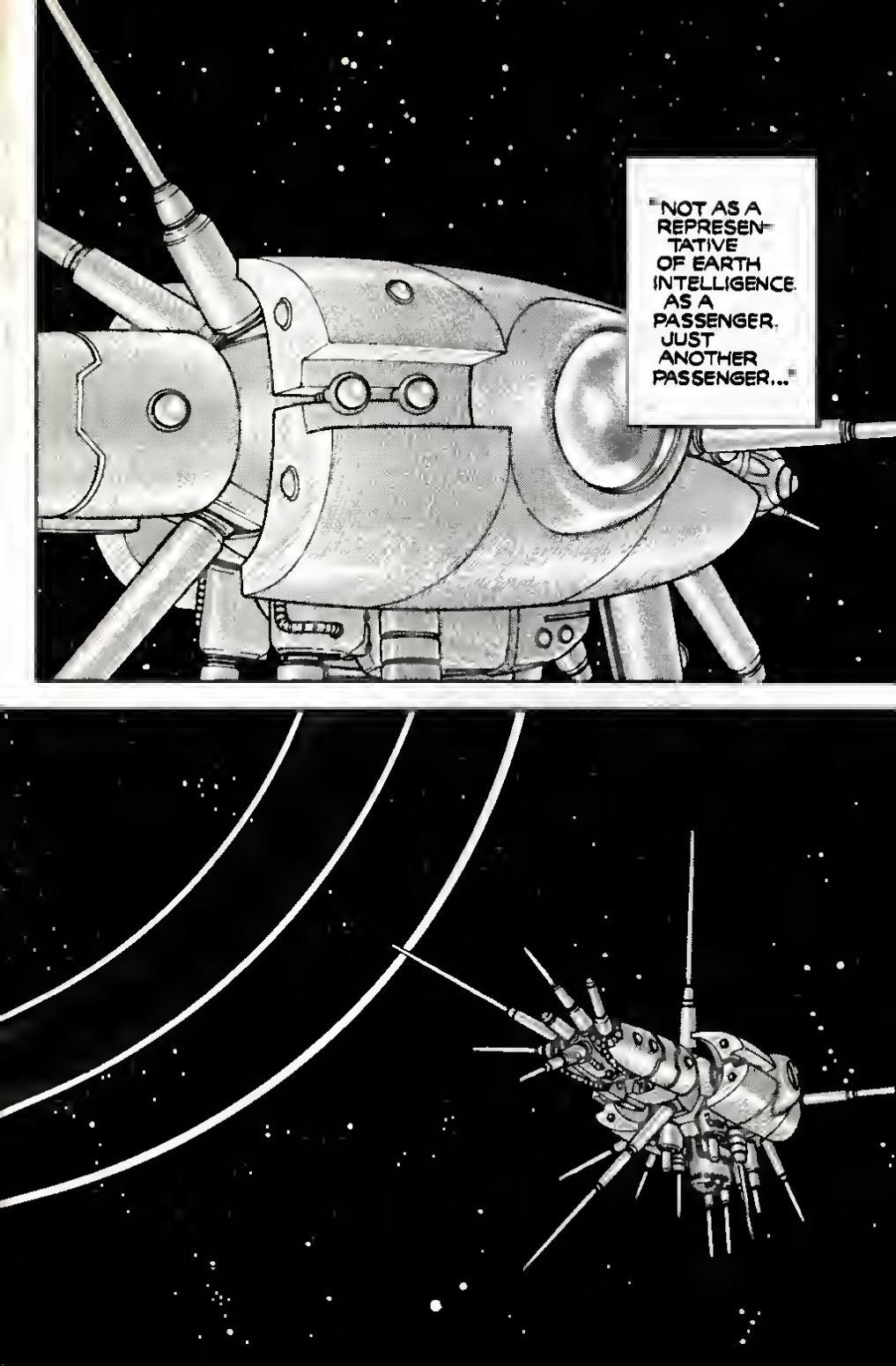


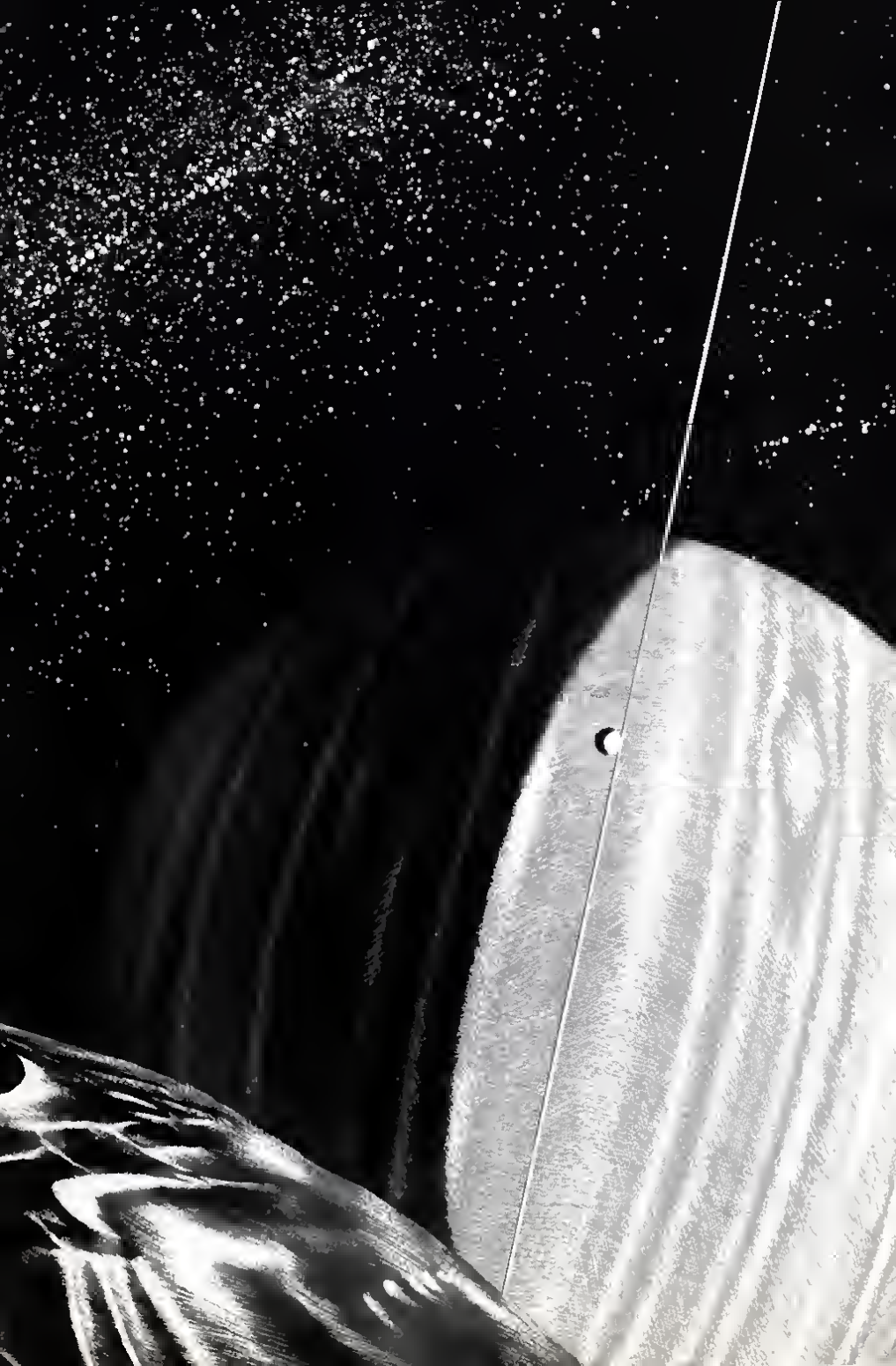
BUT THIS PLANET... THIS TOWN... WE'RE ALL PART OF THE UNIVERSE. DIDN'T YOU KNOW THAT...?

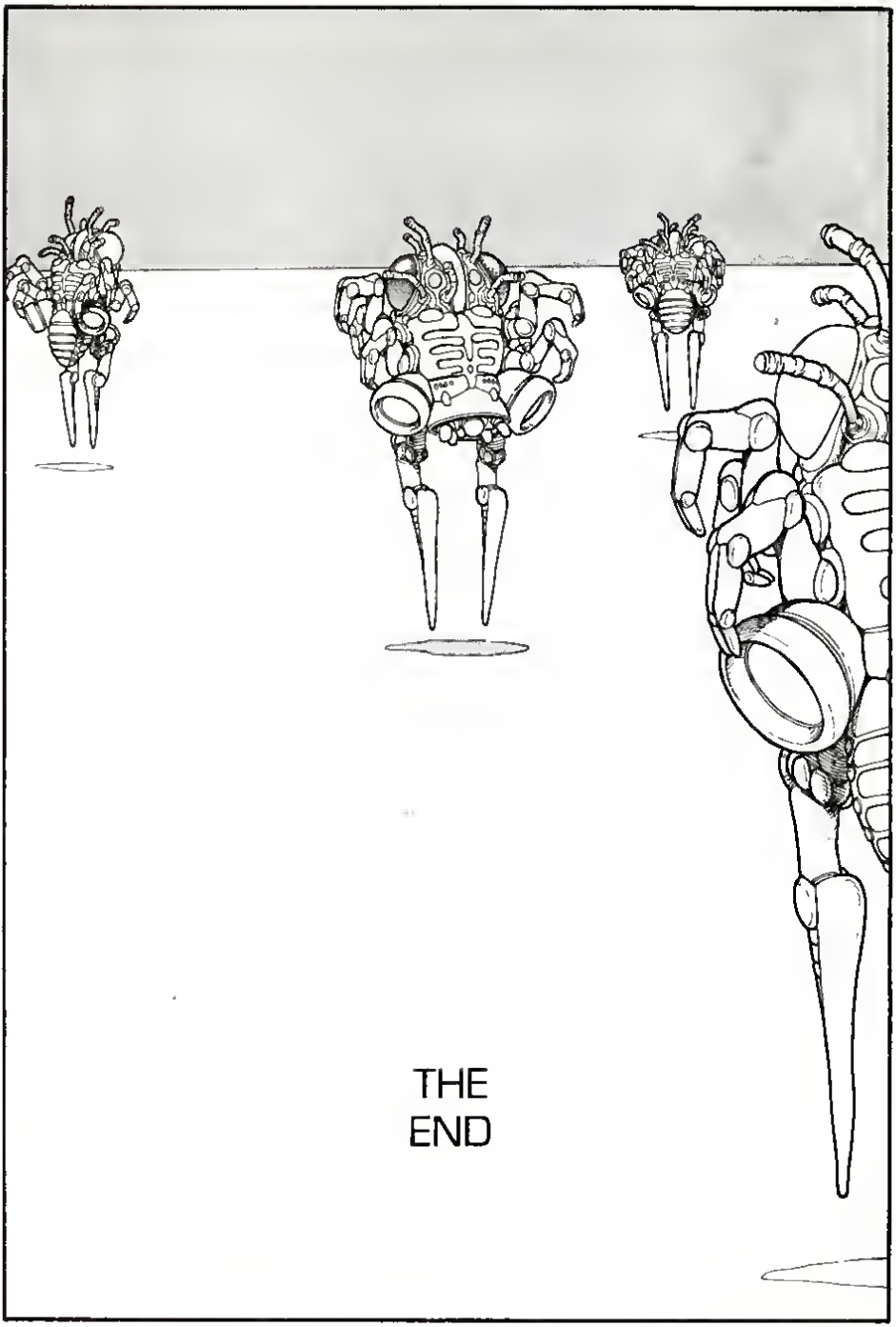



OHZUN ONCE SAID IT WOULD OBEY THE WILL OF WHOEVER IT WAS CONNECTED TO


"SO MAYBE WATANABE'S OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, INSIDE THE MAIN UNIT'S SPACESHIP. MAYBE HE'S USING A TELESCOPE OR SOMETHING TO LOOK AT US HERE ON EARTH, RIGHT NOW."


"NOT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF EARTH INTELLIGENCE. AS A PASSENGER. JUST ANOTHER PASSENGER..."




THE
END